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ABSTRACT

As part of a continuing program of monitoring the number of student withdrawals and tuition refunds at William Rainey Harper College, students dropping courses during fall 1980 were surveyed to determine their characteristics and reasons for withdrawal. Students who simply stopped attending courses were not included in the study. The survey instrument asked students their age, sex, withdrawal status, use of counseling services, principal reason for withdrawal, and method of registration. Responses were obtained from 42% of the 1,831 students who officially withdrew. Findings of the study included the following: (1) 49% of the students were eligible for tuition refunds; (2) 70% of the respondents withdrew from only one course, 8% dropped more than one course but remained enrolled at Harper, and 22% withdrew from Harper entirely; (3) younger students and those registering by telephone were more apt to withdraw than older students or those registering in person; (4) while males and females had comparable withdrawal rates, females were more likely to withdraw completely from the college; (5) 22% of the respondents indicated that they withdrew from the course because it was offered at an inconvenient time, while 19% reported withdrawing because course objectives were not relevant to their needs. The study report details methodology and findings and is appended by the survey instrument. (Author/KL)

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STUDY OF STUDENTS WHO WITHDREW FROM COURSES
DURING THE FALL OF 1980.
Volume 10, Number 12

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JC 810 589

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ABSTRACT

AS PART OF A CONTINUING PROGRAM OF MONITORING STUDENT WITHDRAWALS, STUDENTS DROPPING COURSES DURING THE FALL 1979 SEMESTER WERE ASKED TO COMPLETE A SURVEY FORM ASKING THEIR REASON FOR DROPPING A COURSE AND OTHER STUDENT DATA. SOME 42 PERCENT OF THE 1,831 STUDENTS WHO OFFICIALLY DROPPED COURSES DURING THE FALL TERM RESPONDED TO THE SURVEY FORM. THE SURVEY DID NOT INCLUDE STUDENTS WHO JUST STOPPED ATTENDING CLASS.

RESULTS OF THE SURVEY SHOWED: ALMOST HALF (49 PERCENT) OF THE STUDENTS PARTICIPATING IN THE SURVEY WERE ELIGIBLE FOR TUITION REFUNDS FOR COURSES STARTING AT THE BEGINNING OF THE FALL SEMESTER. THE VAST MAJORITY (70 PERCENT) OF THESE STUDENTS WITHDREW FROM ONLY ONE COURSE WHILE 22 PERCENT WITHDREW FROM HARPER ENTIRELY. THE OTHER EIGHT PERCENT DROPPED MORE THAN ONE COURSE BUT REMAINED ENROLLED AT HARPER. YOUNGER STUDENTS AND THOSE REGISTERING BY TELEPHONE WERE MORE APT TO WITHDRAW THAN OLDER STUDENTS OR THOSE REGISTERING IN PERSON. WHILE FEMALES WERE NO MORE APT TO WITHDRAW FROM COURSES THAN MALES, FEMALES WERE MORE LIKELY TO WITHDRAW COMPLETELY FROM HARPER. THIS MAY BE BECAUSE FEMALES ARE MORE LIKELY TO BE PART-TIME STUDENTS AND MANY TIMES A PART-TIME STUDENT WHO DROPPED ONE OR TWO COURSES WOULD BE, IN EFFECT, COMPLETELY WITHDRAWING FROM THE COLLEGE.

THE MAJOR REASON CITED BY 22 PERCENT OF THE RESPONDENTS FOR WITHDRAWING WAS THAT CLASSES WERE OFFERED AT TIMES THAT WERE INCONVENIENT. THESE STUDENTS WERE ALSO MORE LIKELY TO DROP EARLY IN THE SEMESTER AND TO DROP ONLY ONE COURSE. NO COLLEGE CAN ELIMINATE WITHDRAWALS COMPLETELY FOR THESE REASONS. REGARDLESS OF THE NUMBER OF SECTIONS OFFERED AT DIFFERENT TIMES, THE TIMES WILL STILL BE INCONVENIENT FOR SOME STUDENTS. MOREOVER, NOT ALL SECTIONS CAN BE LEFT OPEN INDEFINITELY BECAUSE OF SIZE LIMITATIONS. HOWEVER, THE PRINCIPAL RESTRICTION IN REDUCING THESE WITHDRAWALS IS THAT AS A COLLEGE INCREASES THE NUMBER OF SECTIONS, IT REDUCES INCONVENIENT TIME DROPS BUT LOWERS THE AVERAGE CLASS SIZE AND INCREASES THE COSTS.

ANOTHER MAJOR REASON FOR DROPPING A COURSE GIVEN BY 19 PERCENT OF THE STUDENTS WAS THAT THE COURSE OBJECTIVES WERE NOT RELEVANT TO THE STUDENTS' NEEDS. THESE STUDENTS WERE LESS LIKELY TO WITHDRAW FROM HARPER ENTIRELY AS COMPARED TO STUDENTS WHO GAVE OTHER REASONS. MANY STUDENTS SHOP AROUND FOR CLASSES AND WILL TRY A COURSE FOR ONE OR TWO WEEKS BEFORE DECIDING WHETHER THEY REALLY WANT THAT COURSE.

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Purpose

The purpose of this study was to monitor the number of withdrawals and tuition refunds and to determine the reasons for students officially withdrawing from Harper. This study covers data gathered from the fall 1979 semester and is similar to the study of withdrawals of the summer 1979 term. A study of this kind will be conducted each semester.

Population Studied and Methodology Used

The survey form shown in the appendix was developed by the Office of Planning and Institutional Research with input and approval from the Student Affairs area. Each student who officially withdrew from a course or from the college was asked to complete the survey form. A total of 767 students, or 42 percent of the 1,831 students who dropped courses during the fall semester, completed this form. Students who walked away or just stopped attending without officially withdrawing were not included in this study.

The data of withdrawal was noted on each form completed so that this data could be linked with tuition refunds for classes beginning at the start of the regular fall semester. This data could not be linked to tuition refunds for courses starting later in the semester (second eight weeks, one day seminars) or tuition refunds granted after the policy dates. (Medical reasons and cases where Harper is at fault.)

Conclusions

Almost half (49 percent) of the students participating in the survey were eligible for tuition refunds for courses starting at the beginning of the fall semester. The vast majority (70 percent) of these students withdrew from only one course while 22 percent withdrew from Harper entirely. Younger students and those registering by telephone were more apt to withdraw than older students or those registering in person. While females were no more apt to withdraw from courses than males, females were more likely to withdraw completely from Harper. This may be because females are more likely to be part-time students and many times a part-time student dropping one or two courses would be, in effect, completely withdrawing from the college.

The major reason for withdrawing cited by 22 percent of the respondents was that classes were offered at times inconvenient to them. These students were also more likely to drop early in the semester and to drop only one course. No college can eliminate withdrawals completely for these reasons. Regardless of the number of sections offered at different times, the times will be inconvenient for some students. Moreover; not all sections can be left open indefinitely because of size limitations. However, the principal restriction in reducing these withdrawals is that as a college increases the number of sections, it reduces inconvenient time drops but lowers the average class size and increases the costs.

Another major reason for dropping a course given by 19 percent of the students was that the course objectives were not relevant to the students' needs. These students were also less likely to drop from Harper entirely as compared to students who gave other reasons. Many students shop around for classes and will try a course before deciding whether or not they really want that course.

Other reasons cited frequently were job pressures (16 percent), personal reasons (14 percent) and being inadequately prepared for the course (12 percent). Job pressures and personal reasons were far more likely to lead to multiple course withdrawals.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

STUDENT WITHDRAWAL INFORMATION BY DATE OF OFFICIAL ACTION - FALL 1979

Information	Received 100 PCT Refund		Received 80 PCT Refund		Received 50 PCT Refund		No Refund Withdrew By Mid-Term		Withdrew After Mid-Term		Total	
	N	PCT	N	PCT	N	PCT	N	PCT	N	PCT	N	PCT
Male	33	34.0	52	41.6	65	41.4	158	52.3	41	53.3	349	46.0
Female	64	66.0	73	58.4	92	58.6	144	47.7	36	46.7	409	54.0
Under age 25	63	66.3	90	75.6	103	68.2	220	75.3	49	66.2	525	71.8
25 years of age or older	32	33.7	29	24.4	48	31.8	72	24.7	25	33.8	206	28.2
Withdrew from one course	57	58.2	88	70.4	114	72.1	227	74.6	47	61.9	533	70.0
Withdrew from more than one course but still enrolled at Harper	14	14.3	7	5.6	11	7.0	23	7.6	7	9.2	62	8.1
Completely withdrew from Harper but plan to return to Harper	12	12.2	17	13.6	15	9.5	28	9.2	13	17.1	85	11.2
Completely withdrew from Harper but not sure whether they will return to Harper	7	7.1	4	3.2	6	3.8	6	2.0	1	1.3	24	3.2
Completely withdrew from Harper and have no plans to return	8	8.2	9	7.2	12	7.6	20	6.6	8	10.5	57	7.5
Consulted a counselor this sem.	39	41.5	38	30.4	49	32.3	97	32.8	22	28.9	245	33.0
Consulted a counselor in past sems	25	26.6	29	23.2	30	19.7	41	13.8	12	15.8	137	18.4
Never consulted a counselor	30	31.9	58	46.4	73	48.0	158	53.4	42	55.3	361	48.6
Registered by Telephone	18	18.6	28.5	22.8	42	26.6	59	19.6	22	29.0	169.5	22.4
Registered in Person	79	81.4	96.5	77.2	116	73.4	242	80.4	54	71.0	587.5	77.6
Total in Category	97	12.8	125	16.5	158	20.8	302	39.8	77	10.1	759	100

STUDENT WITHDRAWAL INFORMATION BY DATE OF OFFICIAL ACTION - FALL 1979

Reason for Withdrawal	Received 100 PCT Refund		Received 80 PCT Refund		Received 50 PCT Refund		No Refund Withdrew By Mid-Term		Withdrew After Mid-Term		Total	
	N	PCT	N	PCT	N	PCT	N	PCT	N	PCT	N	PCT
The times the course met proved to be too inconvenient	26.34	27.4	35.34	28.7	38.25	24.5	54.16	18.2	13	13.8	167.09	21.8
The course objectives did not relate to my needs	14.5	15.1	30	24.4	30.34	19.4	51.16	17.2	18	19.2	144	18.8
Job pressures or was offered new job	19.33	20.1	10.83	8.8	22.75	14.6	55.2	18.5	15	16.0	123.11	16.0
Personal, family or illness problems	15.25	15.9	10.5	8.6	14.58	9.4	46.86	15.7	18	19.2	105.19	13.7
Was inadequately prepared for course	4	4.2	16	13.0	21.08	13.5	41.53	13.9	9.5	10.1	92.11	12.0
Instructor was ineffective	.33	.3	3	2.4	4.33	2.8	17.16	5.7	9.5	10.1	34.32	4.5
Moving out of area	5.25	5.5	5.5	4.5	6.84	4.4	11.5	3.9	2	2.1	31.09	4.1
Load became too heavy	2	2.1	8	6.5	9	5.8	6	2.0	3.5	3.7	28.50	3.7
Financial problems	3.75	3.9	1.50	1.2	2.33	1.5	5.03	1.7	2	2.1	14.61	1.9
Transportation problems getting to Harper	.75	.8	1.33	1.1	2	1.3	4.53	1.5	2	2.1	10.61	1.4
Accepted by another college	2	2.1			2	1.3			.5	.5	4.50	.6
Course cancelled					1	.6	2	.7			3	.4
Location was too inconvenient	1.5	1.6							1	1.1	2.5	.3
Entered military							2	.7			2	.3
Was able to test out of course					1	.6					1	.1
Could not get child in child care services	1	1.0									1	.1
Registration error			1	.8							1	.1
Course demanded too much							.87	.3			.87	.1
Parking problems					.5	.3					.5	.1
Total	96	100	123	100	156	100	298	100	94	100	767	100

STUDENT WITHDRAWAL INFORMATION BY TYPE OF WITHDRAWAL - FALL 1979

Information	Students Withdrawing From Only One Course		Students Withdrawing From More Than One Course		Students Withdrawing From The College Completely	
	N	PCT	N	PCT	N	PCT
Male	254	47.9	32	51.6	62	37.3
Female	276	52.1	30	48.4	104	62.7
Under age 25	382	74.5	43	72.9	101	62.7
25 years of age or older	131	25.5	16	27.1	60	37.3
Consulted a counselor this semester	172	33.1	23	37.7	48	29.6
Consulted a counselor past semesters	93	17.9	14	23.0	32	19.8
Never consulted a counselor	255	49.0	24	39.3	82	50.6
Registered by telephone	117½	22.2	10	16.1	41½	25.0
Registered in person	411½	77.8	52	83.9	124½	75.0

Institutional Totals

	Total FTE	PCT
FTE registering by telephone	1053.4	14.5
FTE registering in person	6228.6	85.5
	7282.0	100.0

STUDENT WITHDRAWAL INFORMATION BY TYPE OF WITHDRAWAL - FALL 1979

Reason for Withdrawal	Students Withdrawing From Only One Course		Students Withdrawing From More Than One Course		Students Withdrawing From the College Completely	
	N	PCT	N	PCT	N	PCT
The times the course met proved to be too inconvenient	137.5	25.5	11.08	17.6	17.5	10.6
The course objectives did not relate to my needs	110.5	20.5	14	22.2	19	11.5
Job pressures or was offered new job	72.84	13.5	12.59	20.0	37.4	22.5
Personal, family or illness problems	56.92	10.6	13.08	20.7	36.6	22.1
Was inadequately prepared for course	79.67	14.8	7.75	12.3	4.7	2.8
Instructor was ineffective	29.33	5.4			4	2.4
Moving out of area	4.58	.8			26.4	15.9
Load became too heavy	31.84	5.9				
Financial problems	5.41	1.0	1	1.6	8.2	4.9
Transportation problems getting to Harper	6.91	1.3			3.7	2.2
Accepted by another college	0	0	1	1.6	3.5	2.1
Course cancelled	1	.2	1	1.6	1	.6
Location was too inconvenient	1.5	.3			1	.6
Entered military	0	0			2	1.2
Was able to test out of course	1	.2				
Couldn't get child in child care services	0	0			1	.6
Registration error	0	0	1	1.6		
Course demanded too much	0	0				
Parking problems	0	0	.5	.8		
Total	539	100	63	100	166	100

APPENDIX

STUDENT WITHDRAWAL INFORMATION

1. Term: Fall____ Spring____ Summer____

2. Date: _____

3. Social Security Number _____

4. Sex: ____ Male

____ Female

5. Age: ____ Under 25

____ 25 or older

6. What is your withdrawal status? Check ( ) one:

____ a. Withdrawing from one course.
____ b. Withdrawing from more than one course but still enrolled at Harper.
____ c. Completely withdrawing from Harper College.

If c, do you plan to return to Harper? ____ Yes ____ No

7. When did you see a counselor? Check ( ) one:

____ a. This semester.
____ b. Past semesters.
____ c. Never saw a counselor.

8. What is the principal reason you withdrew from this course(s) or from Harper? Check ( ) the one principal reason:

____ a. The course objectives did not relate to my needs.
____ b. The times the course met proved to be too inconvenient.
____ c. The instructor(s) were ineffective.
____ d. Personal, family, and illness problems.
____ e. Job pressures or I was offered a new job.
____ f. I am moving out of the area.
____ g. I was inadequately prepared for course.
____ h. Transportation problems getting to Harper.
____ i. Financial problems.
____ j. Parking problems, i.e., Security.
____ k. Other (specify)_____

9. How did you register?

____ a. By phone.
____ b. In person.

10. General comments: _____

_____

_____